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Chairman: Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 112: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS (continued) (A/50/40, 44, A/50/75-E/1995/10, A/50/78-E/1995/11, A/50/93-E/1995/16, A/50/122-E/1995/18, A/50/160, 164, 469, 472, 505, 512 and 755)

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(d) COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION (continued) (A/50/36)

(e) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (continued) (A/50/36 and A/50/743)

1. Mr. NOGUERA (Guatemala) said that the implementation of human rights had become a basic aspect of international efforts to establish a world order based on cooperation, stability and peace. His delegation agreed with the ideas put forward in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/50/36) as guidelines for international cooperation, in accordance with the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Guatemala strongly supported the work of the High Commissioner and urged the international community to ensure that the Centre for Human Rights had the necessary resources to carry out its mandate. The provision of support to the High Commissioner and the Centre should be a priority objective of the United Nations system as a basis for strengthening democracy throughout the world.

2. Guatemala was currently experiencing one of the most important periods of its political development. The armed conflict in the country, which had lasted almost 35 years, was coming to an end, thanks to the political will of the people and the Government as well as the support of the international community. The role of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) was particularly important. As a result of the agreement on human rights signed between the Government and the insurgents and the work of MINUGUA, the number of human rights violations had diminished. An unfortunate incident had occurred on 5 October 1995 in a camp for returnees located in the

area of conflict. The incident, which had led to the death of 11 persons, including three soldiers, had apparently been provoked by returnees. Those involved had been immediately arrested and were being tried. The incident had also led to the immediate dismissal of the Minister of Defence. It was hoped that that case would help strengthen the judicial system in Guatemala.

3. Building a constitutional State in Guatemala was a complicated process and went hand in hand with pacification. One of the aims of that process - the subordination of the security forces to the civilian authorities - would soon be achieved. The run-off in the presidential election would be held on 7 January 1996 under international monitoring in accordance with recognized democratic procedures. Lastly, he urged the international community to continue its support for the peace negotiations between the Guatemalan Government and the insurgents in order to establish lasting peace in the country.

4. Mr. BAKURAMUTSA (Rwanda) said that his Government was open to cooperation with the representatives of human rights organizations, including United Nations monitors. However, his delegation did not feel that the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda (A/50/743) or the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Rwanda had adequately reflected the efforts made by the Rwandan Government to promote human rights and national reconciliation. The reports did not sufficiently stress the problem of genocide or the role of the United Nations monitors in that regard. The Special Rapporteur had referred to the lack of information on the part of the monitors in the field and the disappearance of documents, which had created problems concerning the quality of his report. Neither did the Special Rapporteur underscore the situation of war criminals, who were wandering around in various countries which were parties to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. His Government wondered about the reasons for that approach and might draw appropriate conclusions and even refuse to cooperate.

5. Mr. TANJUATCO (Philippines) said that human rights were of special concern to the Philippine people who, in 1986, had overthrown an oppressive regime not by force of arms, but through their determination to claim their human rights. The Philippine Constitution, adopted in 1987, had established an independent National Commission on Human Rights empowered to investigate all human rights violations and to monitor the Government's compliance with its international treaty obligations. The Commission was also concerned with the promotion and protection of the rights of Filipinos living abroad, particularly women migrant workers. In accordance with the Constitution, human rights education had been incorporated into the school curriculum.

6. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General on national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (A/50/452), particularly the account of the third International Workshop on National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which had been held in Manila. The Workshop had recommended that national human rights institutions should be granted observer status with the United Nations human rights bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights, and that cooperation between those bodies and the national human rights institutions should be enhanced. The Workshop had also made recommendations on the role of

national institutions with regard to the promotion of rights of women, disabled persons and indigenous peoples; the welfare of migrant workers; and the prevention of racism and racial discrimination.

7. His Government's human rights policy was based on two imperatives. First, the people must be empowered to participate in the decisions affecting their daily lives. That goal required special concern for the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society. His Government had consistently promoted initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of those groups and appealed to all countries which had not already done so to sign, ratify or accede to the relevant international instruments. It was a cause for concern that, while 20 countries must sign, ratify or accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families before it could come into effect, only 7 had done so thus far.

8. Second, there must be a strong economy to meet the needs of the people. In both the Declaration on the Right to Development (General Assembly resolution 41/128, annex) and the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the right to development had been identified as a fundamental human right. He welcomed the decision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to devote special attention to that right. His Government, for its part, was striving to eliminate the conditions that caused human rights violations in the Philippines, namely poverty, injustice, the inequitable distribution of wealth and urban overcrowding. Ultimately, the promotion and protection of human rights depended upon the commitment of Governments, the dedication of leaders and the vigilance of peoples.

9. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer for Palestine) said that the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights had constituted a major step towards the promotion and protection of human rights and that the United Nations, as a whole, and the Centre for Human Rights, in particular, should do more to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Her delegation recognized the important role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in that regard and his great efforts to improve the functioning of the Organization's human rights machinery. While she commended the High Commissioner for his valuable report (A/50/36), she believed that attention should be given to the violation of the human rights of people living under foreign occupation or alien domination. The international community should consider promotion of the right to development a top priority and strive to implement the recommendations of the Working Group on the Right to Development.

10. The human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, was cause for grave concern. The Palestinian people were still being denied the right to self-determination, which was considered a basic human right under the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The United Nations system should do more to assist the Palestinian people in their efforts to implement that right. The situation of the Palestinian refugees and displaced persons was another matter of grave concern. Approximately half of the Palestinian people were refugees, and a large number were displaced persons, who remained scattered throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and other countries. The international community should

continue to provide them with the necessary assistance until a final and just solution was attained.

11. The demolition and sealing of Palestinian homes by the Israeli authorities continued to be used as means of collective punishment and represented a clear violation of human rights. Furthermore, the repeated imposition of curfews and closing of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem by those authorities seriously affected the economic situation and development of the Palestinian people. Her delegation remained greatly concerned about the continuing practice of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment by the Israeli authorities and called for the immediate release of all remaining Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

12. The continuing confiscation of land and the building of illegal settlements by the Israeli Government also affected the rights of the Palestinian people and had dangerous consequences for the peace process. The promotion of the social, civil, political and economic rights of the Palestinian people could be guaranteed only by strict observance of the international human rights instruments and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, particularly as set forth in the fourth Geneva Convention.

13. Mr. FERNÁNDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) said that his delegation had been actively participating in the work of the Working Group on the Right to Development established by the Commission on Human Rights. The negotiations had unfortunately been impeded by positions which failed to recognize basic provisions of the Declaration on the Right to Development. It was hoped that the Working Group's mandate would be renewed soon so that it could conclude its work.

14. He expressed satisfaction at the manner in which the High Commissioner for Human Rights had been carrying out his mandate and would continue to support his work, recognizing the need for more resources to enable the Centre for Human Rights to carry out its mandate. Like many developing countries, Cuba believed that the only way to address human rights at the international level was through cooperation and dialogue, on the basis of the principles of universality and objectivity. There was also a need to strengthen the Centre through the establishment of a specific subprogramme for the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development, a more equitable distribution of resources among the various subprogrammes and a real balance in the geographical distribution of its personnel. It was also necessary to rationalize and simplify its activities to make it more effective. Cuba was ready to cooperate with all United Nations bodies in the implementation of all human rights in all countries.

15. The discussion of the situation of human rights in specific countries continued to be the occasion for rhetoric based on unjust and selective accusations. His delegation was concerned about the increasingly frequent manifestations of racism, intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination that occurred in the industrialized world, where the victims continued to be migrant workers and their families, refugees and ethnic and linguistic minorities. Cuba nevertheless recognized the efforts begun by some of those countries to formulate a general strategy to combat racism and xenophobic acts.

16. The most obvious case of grave violations of human rights in an industrialized country, however, was that of the United States, where the "American dream" was a tragic nightmare for vast sectors of its population in a society that was unable to conceal the situation of extreme inequality and open discrimination that affected tens of millions of African Americans, Latin Americans, Asians and indigenous people.

17. Perhaps the most accurate picture of the true human rights situation in the United States was to be found in its judicial and penitentiary system, where 1.5 million persons filled the prisons of that country, which had the highest rate of imprisonment and the largest juvenile penal system in the world. One could only conclude that the judicial system in the United States was one of the most repressive in the world and that that repression was carried out with particular force against minorities and other groups that were discriminated against. That was the model which that country tried to depict fraudulently as the universal archetype of a system guaranteeing respect for human rights. The elimination of such violations and the attainment of full respect for all human rights must be an objective of the United Nations. Cuba reaffirmed its full support for the Organization in that regard and hoped that those rights could be guaranteed in all aspects of political, economic and social life through dialogue and cooperation.

18. Mr. de ROJAS (Venezuela) said that, 50 years after the adoption of the Charter, it was clear that the human rights sphere was one of those in which the Organization had been most active, the principles of the Charter had been increasingly applied, and the domestic law of States had been strongly influenced by international standards. Instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had served as vital pillars in the construction of an international regime in that field.

19. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had marked the beginning of a new stage, in which an integrated approach to human rights was required. It was no longer a matter for States alone; it was a topic which concerned all of humanity, and called for more effective forms of cooperation. Events following the end of the cold war had emphasized the paradoxes of a world in transition; in addition to older problems, new challenges had arisen, such as intolerance, xenophobia and racism, and ethnic and religious conflicts. The international community was having to give serious thought to the concepts of nationality and sovereignty, and to seek a balance between the national principles of self-determination and non-intervention and so-called "supranational" exigencies.

20. It would be unacceptable and incomprehensible to discriminate between those human rights which could inspire interest and involvement by States and organizations, and others which would appear to be reserved for those countries that enjoyed them, with the latter feeling absolved of any moral duty to share their achievements. The World Conference on Human Rights had reaffirmed that the right to development was an inalienable human right. In a world characterized by widespread poverty, illiteracy and violence, the international community should endeavour to implement that right through effective development policies and equitable economic relations. Democracy was the most favourable framework for guaranteeing the full enjoyment of human rights, while development

would contribute to the consolidation and stability of democratic Governments, social harmony and a climate of peace throughout the world.

21. His delegation attributed particular importance to strengthening the Centre for Human Rights, whose work was becoming a focus for a developing, comprehensive human rights strategy. In that context, particular attention should be paid to economic and social rights and the right to development.

22. His Government was implementing a number of activities within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, for the purpose of reinforcing a human rights culture. Those included the creation of a human rights commission, incorporating governmental and non-governmental bodies, the role of which was to promote human rights values in primary and secondary education. Similar initiatives had been undertaken in higher education and in police training.

23. He welcomed the report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti (A/50/714). The international community should continue to support efforts to consolidate democracy in Haiti, which would be further strengthened by the forthcoming presidential elections. The Centre for Human Rights should continue its programme of technical cooperation with the Government of Haiti, with emphasis on legislative reform, training and human rights education. He expressed concern at recent acts of violence in Haiti, and hoped that such incidents would not impair the functioning of the democratic process. His delegation, together with a number of others, would shortly introduce a draft resolution on the situation of human rights in that country, to emphasize the commitment of the international community to helping Haiti to consolidate its democratic institutions and achieve full respect for human rights.

24. Mr. LAVROV (Russian Federation) said that in the 50 years since the inception of the United Nations, the ideals of freedom and human rights which had inspired its founders had withstood the test of the cold war and had been strengthened by the triumph of democracy in the world. Now, the Organization was entering a new era marked by fresh opportunities and challenges. Today, the interconnection between massive human rights violations and the outbreak of armed conflicts was becoming increasingly evident. Consideration of human rights issues within the United Nations system should, therefore, be more closely linked with the problems of safeguarding peace and security, and the Centre for Human Rights should study the relationship between those two areas.

25. The rationalization of the activities of the Commission on Human Rights remained a matter of urgency. His vision of the Commission was of a dynamic body, able to respond quickly and effectively to the most pressing human rights problems. Regrettably, politicized rhetoric often hindered United Nations activities in the human rights field. States must seek common ground, rather than focusing on the issues which divided them. A qualitative improvement of the United Nations human rights mechanisms was required to enable the Organization to respond to the challenges of the new era.

26. The Russian Federation had welcomed, in that context, the creation by General Assembly resolution 48/141 of the post of United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights and commended the High Commissioner's work to prevent human rights violations, encourage dialogue with Governments and improve the coordination of United Nations activities in the human rights field. His determined contribution to the efforts to resolve the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi was particularly laudable. His delegation wished to draw the High Commissioner's attention to the need for strict impartiality and for more careful consideration of the names used to designate countries and areas within those countries in order to avoid political incidents.

27. One of the most important points of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was the recognition that the promotion and protection of human rights were a legitimate concern of the international community. The Russian Federation supported that principle and, accordingly, had made every attempt to respond positively to the statement of the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation in Chechnya. The federal armed forces had ceased military operations and dialogue was in progress with a view to arriving at a peaceful settlement of the conflict. His Government was striving to rebuild the Chechen economy and had scheduled elections. The International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations enjoyed free access to all areas of Chechnya.

28. The protection of the rights of national minorities was a prerequisite for international peace and security. That issue was of vital importance for the Russian Federation, since 25 per cent of its nationals lived beyond its borders. His Government's policy was to encourage them to become integrated into the political, social and economic life of the newly independent States while preserving their cultural identity. There was a need to establish a legal basis for the protection of the rights of Russian nationals living in the territories of members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States and, conversely, nationals of those countries living in the Russian Federation. The recent signing by members of the Commonwealth of Independent States of a convention on the rights of national minorities was a significant step towards that goal.

29. In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone had the right to a nationality. Yet, the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia was being denied that right. The adoption in Latvia of a law on the status of citizens of the former USSR not having citizenship of Latvia or any other citizenship had gone some way to solving that problem. The situation of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia, however, was not improving. The authorities were exerting ever greater pressure on the non-Estonian population. The right of Russian Orthodox believers to freedom of religion was being infringed. The Russian Federation's concerns had been reflected in the comments of the Human Rights Committee on the reports submitted by Latvia and Estonia under article 40 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

30. With regard to the situation in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, double standards were evident, with certain countries demanding air strikes in retaliation for ethnic cleansing committed by one side, while turning a blind eye to identical acts committed by the other sides. Such an approach could only undermine confidence in the impartiality of the international community. The

most important tasks for the United Nations now were to prevent further human rights violations, enable refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes, rebuild trust and conduct elections.

31. His delegation wished to draw attention to the situation in Afghanistan which, since the withdrawal of Soviet troops, had ceased to be a focus of international concern, despite the intensification of the violence and suffering there. He appealed to Member States to use their influence to secure the release of the Russian citizens held against their will by the Taliban Movement.

32. The Russian Federation viewed with optimism the continuation of the Middle East peace process and, as a co-sponsor, would do everything in its power to secure a lasting and just peace in the Middle East. The experience of the United Nations since its inception had shown that the attainment of peace, respect for human rights and freedom from fear and want was entirely dependent upon the efforts and abilities of its Member States.

33. Mr. STROHAL (Austria), speaking on agenda item 112 (d), said that the system-wide and integrated approach to human rights issues called for in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was increasingly reflected in the activities of the United Nations system, a view confirmed by the recommendations of other recent international conferences.

34. The coordination of human rights protection went beyond the United Nations system: regional, national and non-governmental organizations constituted an increasingly close international network to ensure that Governments could exercise their primary responsibility in that area. The integrated approach was further rendered necessary through the interlinkage of human rights, democracy and sustainable development which not only underlay the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action but was a prior condition for ensuring lasting international peace and security.

35. The full realization of human rights, however, remained fragile, as was apparent not only from the tragedies in Rwanda and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also from the continuing violations in all parts of the world, which took the form of summary executions, arbitrary detention, disappearances and torture and manifestations of new forms of racism and xenophobia in disregard of the fundamental principles of humanitarian law.

36. The provision of effective remedies and the prevention of human rights violations related to the use the international community made of the information received from the United Nations fact-finding and monitoring system. Providing remedies meant establishing clear accountability, overcoming the impunity of the perpetrators of violations and ensuring compensation for victims. That in turn meant an independent judiciary, the training of officials, human rights education and the strengthening of national institutions. Those national objectives could most effectively be achieved in an open and democratic society and in a clear framework for sustainable development.

37. Measures for national implementation found their natural support at the international level in the universal ratification of international human rights

instruments, the implementation of recommendations from treaty bodies or special procedures and the integration of human rights into development programmes. The provision of advisory services and technical assistance played a crucial role in that respect.

38. Similar considerations were true of prevention and underlined the continuum from providing remedies, through action to prevent human rights violations, to ensuring protection of human rights.

39. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had a central role to play in realizing those objectives. On the basis of a broad mandate and in a spirit of dialogue, consensus and solidarity, he had from the start shown his dedication and courage when confronted with the genocide in Rwanda. He had further been able to foster an integrated approach through his continuous dialogue with Governments and with international and non-governmental organizations. That approach, along with the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights, needed adequate resources; there was therefore a need to endorse the Secretary-General's budget proposal for human rights activities.

40. It was in the spirit of enhancing international cooperation in human rights that his delegation was again submitting a draft resolution on the comprehensive follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and was confident of widespread support.

41. Other initiatives which his delegation was presenting to the General Assembly at the current session concerned the protection of minorities, which called for enhanced international cooperation to defuse conflict situations; attention to the specific needs of children and juveniles in conflict with the law in the context of human rights in the administration of justice; and the plight of internally displaced persons, in respect of which the work of the Secretary-General's representative on that question had been crucial.

42. Integration, coordination and cooperation were the keys to a comprehensive implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which provided a framework for the international strategies - of which the High Commissioner was the focal point - for solving what were complex international problems.

43. Mr. VELLISTE (Estonia), speaking on agenda item 112 (b), cited the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (General Assembly resolution 47/135, annex), which stated that the promotion and realization of the rights of persons belonging to minorities would contribute to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation among peoples and States. To put that into practice was no easy task, however. His delegation welcomed Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/24, in which the Commission had decided to authorize the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to establish an inter-sessional working group to promote minority rights, and reiterated its opinion that adequate resources should be allocated to the Centre for Human Rights and to the High Commissioner.

44. He pointed out that Estonia had a tradition of legal protection and promotion of ethnic minorities which went back to 1925. The situation had

changed drastically during the years of the Soviet occupation, when the entire system of schools and cultural institutions had become increasingly Russian-speaking and any attempt to preserve national culture had been regarded as dissident nationalism. In 1993, after the restoration of Estonia's independence, the Estonian Parliament had adopted a new law on cultural autonomy whereby persons belonging to minorities enjoyed wide-ranging linguistic and cultural rights. The Government also provided public education in certain minority languages and was determined to continue that practice. Another development had been the establishment by the President of Estonia of the Round Table of Minorities, which was cooperating with the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to promote dialogue between different minority groups residing in Estonia.

45. His delegation supported United Nations efforts to improve human rights monitoring and implementation and viewed the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as an essential building-block in the process. It also supported the steadfast work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The United Nations still had room for improvement, however. One way to guarantee more involved discussions on human rights was to increase ties with other international organizations and to expand regional involvement. The exchange of information would result in a better knowledge of the issues at stake and would counter false information.

46. His Government had actively sought to correct the legacy of Soviet rule by becoming a party to the United Nations human rights conventions and by radically renewing its legislation and policies. A new criminal code had been drafted and judicial reform, based on democratic principles and the rule of law, was complete. There was, however, a need to develop legal and practical policies, with the aid of international organizations and Western States, to deal with persons illegally entering Estonia.

47. His Government gave priority to meeting internationally recognized legal and human rights norms. Citizenship and residency laws had been drafted under the guidance of the Council of Europe and were based on the continuity of the pre-war republic. An OSCE mission established in 1992 monitored events and kept a watchful eye on regional bilateral relations. To date, it had not recorded any human rights violations in Estonia.

48. The Government had taken unprecedented measures to assist the integration of its residents of foreign origin: non-citizens could vote in local municipal elections; there were no laws restricting employment to Estonian citizens; and Estonian language centres assisted non-speakers of the language. The policies were already showing results in the numbers of persons who had obtained Estonian citizenship and in the recent comments by the Vice-President of the United States, to the effect that Estonia was becoming a State based on tolerance and modern civic values.

49. Mr. PANTIRU (Republic of Moldova) observed that over the past five decades the scope of United Nations human rights activities had greatly expanded. The international community was taking a more balanced approach to the issue, which included economic, social and cultural rights along with civil and political

rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had marked the culmination of a long process of review and debate over the current status of human rights machinery in the world, and had strengthened the foundation for additional progress in that area.

50. Democratization of society was closely connected with the promotion of human rights. It especially concerned countries in transition, which was a political process requiring consultation with and participation of all sectors of society. His Government had acceded to the major international human rights instruments, and did its utmost to fulfil the obligations arising from them. It recognized the rights of all minorities and considered respect for those rights to be an obligation of any democratic State. Aware that human rights problems were directly connected with the degree of stability of the country, his Government had done its best to solve those problems, initiating a number of normative actions regarding promotion and observance of the rights of national, linguistic and religious minorities. The country's Constitution provided favourable conditions for the representatives of all ethnic groups to be elected to Parliament and to public institutions, and provided everything necessary for the affirmation of their cultural, linguistic and religious identity. The law on languages that had been adopted was considered by international experts to be one of the most liberal laws of its kind in the States of the former Soviet Union.

51. Unfortunately, the process of establishing a democratic society in the Republic of Moldova was affected by separatist manifestations in the eastern part of the Republic, inspired and supported by certain external political influences. In the so-called Trans-Dniester Republic, political, economic, civil and cultural rights continued to be flagrantly violated. Moral and physical persecution of political opponents was also continuing. Claims made in recent years by ethnic Russians in the region that their rights were being systematically violated and that they needed Russian protection to guard against his Government's aggressive intentions were simply not true. The delegations of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which had visited the Trans-Dniester region had witnessed that there were no indications of any major coexistence problems between ethnic Moldovans, Russians and Ukrainians in the region. Any claim that a Russian military presence was necessary was at best dubious. His Government's readiness to grant special status to the region within the Republic of Moldova was further proof of the inconsistency of the separatist leaders' arguments.

52. Despite its ethnic connotations, the conflict in the Trans-Dniester region was a political and ideological one, between a breakaway minority of unreformed Communists and the constitutional authorities of the Republic of Moldova, who were making sincere efforts to steer the country towards democracy, a market economy and ethnic harmony. The illegal actions of the separatist leaders were supported by certain political forces from the Russian Federation under the pretext of protecting the rights of ethnic Russians. His delegation considered that the actions of any State for the protection of the human rights of minorities living in another State could not and should not lead to interference in the latter's internal affairs. Such actions contradicted the fundamental principles of international law and should be condemned by the international community.

53. The successful promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world greatly depended on the efforts of all Member States. His Government was committed to the major human rights instruments and would continue to implement their provisions.

AGENDA ITEM 110: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN (continued) (A/C.3/50/L.31/Rev.1)

54. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft resolution entitled "The girl child" in document A/C.3/50/L.31/Rev.1.

55. Mrs. LEGWAILA (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the States of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, said that, although it acknowledged the need to protect the rights of all children, the draft resolution recognized that the girl child was particularly neglected in some societies.

56. The considerable number of States sponsoring the draft resolution reflected the fact that the rights of the girl child were widely considered to be of great importance. Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, the Solomon Islands and Turkey had added their names to the list of sponsors. She hoped that the Committee would approve the document by consensus.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.